

## **Darien Public Schools - Administrative Offices**

---

35 Leroy Avenue – P.O. Box 1167 – Darien, Connecticut 06820-1167  
Tel: 203-656-7412 Email: [aaddley@darienps.org](mailto:aaddley@darienps.org)

Testimony  
Submitted to the  
Appropriations Committee  
February 17, 2022

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and Members of the Appropriations Committee: I am Dr. Alan Addley, Superintendent of Darien Public Schools. I am submitting testimony on the Governor's FY 23 Proposed Budget as it pertains to the funding of Excess Cost Reimbursement (ECR) Grant for special education expenses.

The State's special education ECR Grant has been frozen for nearly two decades with a reimbursement rate of approximately 75% which leaves the cost increases to be funded by local school districts. Simultaneously, statewide special education identification rates and expenditures have grown significantly. This special education expenditure is usually the greatest financial challenge on school budgets throughout Connecticut

The State should remove or increase the cap on special education reimbursement. Ultimately, to make up the deficit, the State needs to fully fund or phase in approximately \$70M more than the current \$140M Excess Cost Grant.

In addition to not fully funding special education expenditures, Connecticut is one of only a few states where the burden of proving the appropriateness of a child's program resides with school districts rather than the parents. The burden of proof responsibility on school districts often results in significant legal costs. Implementing a change in the burden of proof requires no funding from the State.

In Darien, if the ECR Grant was fully funded this school year, the District would have received an additional \$1,527,664 based on our filing and a budgeted 67.5% reimbursement rate. That would have allowed the District to invest in the educational programming for all students or reduce the 4.03% budget increase to a 2.5% increase. This dynamic is playing out in school districts across the state. Rising special education costs are consuming larger parts of district budgets and negatively impacting the education for all students.

It is time for the State to meet its equity and ethical responsibility and commitment to fund the education for our students with the greatest needs.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sincerely yours,



Dr. Alan Addley  
Superintendent of School